

NEGOTIATING LANGUAGE USE IN SPECIFIC DOMAINS AMONG EAST AFRICAN MIGRANT STUDENTS AND WORKERS IN GHANA

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This study investigates how migration to Ghana affects the language use and language choice of East African migrant students and workers in specific domains. The study explores strategies employed by these migrants to negotiate challenges encountered during communication in selected linguistic spaces to meet their socioeconomic needs in Ghana. The paper also aims to explore the effect of migration on their language use both in Ghana and their home countries. Specific linguistic spaces considered include residential, work/campus, and market environments. The main findings of the study show that due to the completely different linguistic landscape in Ghana, migration compels East African migrant students and workers to use English or learn Ghanaian local languages, especially, in domains such as their places of residence, work/campus and the market place, rather than their preferred language choice, which would be Kiswahili. Particularly, to negotiate in communicative situations at the market places, they usually have to resort to strategies such as soliciting interpretation assistance from local people and/or using signs and body gestures.

1. Introduction¹

This paper seeks to investigate the effects of migration on language use and language choice of East African² migrant students and workers in Ghana, in specific linguistic domains. Although intra-African migration has been significant over the years, migration of East Africans to West Africa has been very low. The last population census of Ghana, which was undertaken a decade ago, indicates that non-Ghanaian residents constituted below three percent (3%) of the population and out of these, less than one percent (1%) were foreign migrants from other parts of Africa, excluding migrants from the Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS; Ghana Statistical Service 2012).

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Background: This study forms part of a larger research project on “Language and Communication in Specific Domains: Negotiating Multilingualism and Constructing Identities” at the School of Languages, at the University of Ghana (funded by the Andrew Mellon Foundation). There are three sub-themes in the project: Language and Migration, Language and Communication, and Construction of Identities. Our study falls under the sub-theme: Language and Migration.

² By East African in our case, we refer to the member countries of the East African Community which include Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Burundi, Rwanda as well as South Sudan.

The linguistic ecology and language use in specific domains in East Africa is quite distinct from that of Ghana. As in East Africa, especially Tanzania and Kenya, Kiswahili is the dominant language of daily communication and in Ghana the dominant local language is Twi; English is the only shared language in both East Africa and Ghana. Therefore East African migrants are facing major linguistic challenges that cause them to negotiate their language use and language choice in specific domains in Ghana.

The study, therefore, seeks to explore the sociolinguistic factors that influence the choice of language of East African migrants in Ghana within specific linguistic spaces. By doing so, it investigates how migration has affected the language use of East African migrants and the linguistic strategies they employ in order to meet their socioeconomic needs in Ghana. The paper also discusses specific domains in which migration has affected the choice of language of East African migrants in Ghana, and the alternative language choices these domains trigger, as well as their preferred language choice in the same domains in their home countries.

In the next section, we will briefly review the discourse on language use and migration in the context of this study. This is followed by a discussion of the data and methodology of the study. Subsequently, we will analyze, compare and discuss the findings in relation to the language use of the migrants in certain domains, before we will come to a final conclusion.

2. Migration and language use

Issues of migration cannot be discussed without language, as language use plays an important role for migration as well as integration. The scientific discourse on language, identity, and linguistic practices of migrants (Extra & Verhoeven 1998; Dustmann 1999; Nevalainen 2000) indicates that there is a positive correlation between the mobility of speakers and the mobility of their language repertoires. In other words, people tend to migrate to places where other speakers of their languages live. This is true where migrants share common L1 and L2 with their host countries. Other studies have shown that migrants' preferences for foreign countries are based on the languages spoken in the host countries. Thus, language planning policies of migrant families play a key role in their choice of foreign countries (Extra & Yagmur 2006; King *et al.* 2008; Panicacci 2019). Kate Hammer's (2017a, 2017b) studies on migrants' acculturation have also shown that sequential bilingual migrants are able to internalize L2 effectively through sociocultural integration and that it is a reliable predictor of the extent of L2 use across language functions. Hammer (2017a) states that migrants use L2 more frequently in informal settings with L1 speakers and that the domains of use of L2 are determined by the migrants' level of integration.

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Other studies on migration and language use, such as Vigouroux (2008) and Lee & Park (2010) have argued that migration can have effects on speakers' management of their language repertoire. Vigouroux (2009: 229) shows that foreigners have to reshuffle their language resources, as well as learn one or two languages of the host countries because they have entered into new discursive spaces. This means that migrants shelve certain elements of their pre-migration linguistic repertoire as they adopt new language resources for various pragmatic reasons, based on the new discursive spaces they encounter and even sometimes based on their linguistic projections into the future. Dustmann & Fabbri (2003) and Bleakley & Chin (2004) also looked at how migrants' proficiency in language can be used as a bargaining tool in determining positive and high wages employment probabilities. Davila (2017) discussing youth migration and language, posits that the language barrier of the youth in Sweden may pose employment challenges, as well as price discrimination for migrants.

Compared to Europe and America, only a few studies have been undertaken in the area of migration and language use in Africa. With regards to East Africa, Brockerhoff & Biddlecom (1999) have analyzed migration in relation to health issues in Kenya. Their study indicates that migration plays a major role for the spread of HIV/Aids among Kenyans and that the pace of infection varies in terms of gender as well as the direction of movement of people. Findings from the study reveal that male migrants from urban centers and females from rural areas are more prone to HIV/Aids than non-migrant partners (Brockerhoff & Biddlecom 1999).

Bosire (2006) and Gill *et al.* (2008) have looked at linguistic strategies that migrants use to mark their identity. Bosire (2006) for instance discusses codeswitching as a language strategy employed by Kenyan migrants in America to mark their identities. Bosire (2006) also posits that codeswitching as the target group's performance of 'being Kenyan' is a discourse that revolves around forging and maintaining a unique immigrant identity with Kiswahili (and other Kenyan languages). When a specific language use becomes habitual, according to Bosire, it indicates that the people (Kenyans) shape, adapt, and create discourses about language and reconfigure it to serve their purposes. Gill *et al.* (2008) explore how Somali youth living in the UK use language to make sense of their identities and affiliations within the specific situated context of everyday encounters at home and in school. Furthermore, they point out that language change from Somali language has affected their linguistic spaces such as home, workplace etc. However, as stated above, studies on migration of East Africans such as Brockerhoff & Biddlecom (1999), Bosire (2006) and Gill *et al.* (2008) have not focused on the dynamics of migration and language.

In Ghana, Ansah *et al.* (2017) discuss rural-urban migration with a focus on language-migration interconnection among *kayayei* (female porters) in three urban markets in Accra. With the assumption that the complex language situation in Accra would pose challenges to

these female porters who travel to Accra in search of a better livelihood, Ansah *et al.* (2017) investigate the coping strategies that these women employ to meet these linguistic challenges. They found that these female migrant porters had to learn only a few phrases of the widely spoken Ghanaian language, Akan³, in order to foster communication with their clients, since very minimum linguistic exchange is required in their business areas. Investigating language socialization of members of two groups of migrants of Nigerien origin living in Ghana, Amuzu *et al.* (2019) discuss how the Tamasheque-speaking beggars in Accra (Ghana's capital) and Hausa, Zambarima, and Buzu-speaking hawkers at the Akuapem Ridge (Eastern Region of Ghana) use language in domains such as the home and the workplace. They found out that migrants' socioeconomic integration is closely related to their sociolinguistic integration. Their studies show that while migrant parents could not learn any Ghanaian language, their children who embark on economic activities such as petty-trading and porter services learn one of the Ghanaian languages and the choice is usually Akan. They also point out that the host community also plays an important role in aiding the rapid socialization of the guests in terms of acquiring the language.

Ghana, Kenya, and Tanzania among most other African countries are multilingual with about 81, 68 and 127 languages respectively (Eberhard *et al.* 2019). Nevertheless, language practices in each country are distinct. The language ecology of Ghana is typically multilingual with several languages including English, spoken as lingua franca. English was declared the official language of Ghana after independence. The medium of instruction in the first three years of primary school is one of the ten government-approved local languages depending on the homogeneity of a particular community (Brock-Utne & Holmarsdottir 2004; Bodomo *et al.* 2009). In secondary school, the medium of instruction is English (Anyidoho 2018). Kenya also has two main lingua franca; English and Kiswahili which is now the official language. Prior to this, English had been the official language since independence, and Kiswahili has been a compulsory subject in primary and secondary schools since independence (Muthwii 2002).

However, in the case of Tanzania, although there are 127 local languages, Kiswahili is used by almost the entire population as a first or second language. In Tanzania, unlike in other African states, Kiswahili was declared as the national and official language, and this further consolidated the position of Kiswahili in the country. It also became the medium of instruction at the primary school level (Brock-Utne & Holmarsdottir 2004: 70). Although Kiswahili is the dominant daily medium of communication in most linguistic spaces in Tanzania (see Dzahene-Quarshie 2009, 2011), the former colonial language English also plays an important role in Tanzania. From colonial times up to date, English has been used in many domains. It continues to be used in

³ Akan is a language which belongs to the Kwa subgroup of the Niger Congo phylum of African languages.

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education as a compulsory subject in primary education and as the medium of instruction in secondary and tertiary education. Eberhard *et al.* (2019) identifies English as one of the two main languages of Tanzania. Even at the primary level there are many private English medium schools in Tanzania. However, proficiency in English is still a challenge to many Tanzanians.

Given the very different linguistic background of East and West Africa and Tanzania, Kenya and Ghana respectively, East African migrants face many linguistic challenges after migration. Therefore, in this paper we look at how East African academic migrants deal with these challenges as well as how they negotiate communicative situations in specific linguistic domains.

3. Data and methodology

The main areas and questions of inquiry of the study were: how language use of East African migrant academics has been affected by their migration to Ghana, the linguistic strategies they employ to meet their socioeconomic needs, the specific domains in which migration affects their choice of language as well as the preferred language choice of East African migrants in the same domains in their home countries.

A purposive sampling and mixed methods approach (both qualitative and quantitative) was used to analyze the language strategies migrant students and workers employ in their day-to-day activities within their linguistic spaces such as academic/work environment, places of residence and market places. One of the key objectives of the study was to look at the ways in which East African students and academics living in Ghana negotiate their linguistic choices, and the domains that trigger the use of one language over others. This group of respondents was targeted because preliminary investigations undertaken by the authors indicated that to a large extent East African migrants in Ghana fall into this category.

Data for the study was collected through questionnaires and interviews of East African students and workers residing in Ghana. The questionnaires were administered in four regions in Ghana, namely the Greater Accra Region, Eastern Region, Western Region, and Ashanti Region. These regions were chosen because those were the places where East African immigrants were known to reside. Initially, we expected to find East African migrants with diverse backgrounds. However, locating East African migrants was challenging because as indicated by the 2010⁴ population census of Ghana, the number of East African residents in Ghana is relatively small. We had to rely on a few respondents we found to link us up with the rest of our respondents. Thus, they were selected according to their availability. In all, we have met 33 East African migrants

⁴ The next population census will be undertaken sometime in 2020. It is conducted once a decade.

across the four regions. Most of the migrants resided on various university and college campuses. Those who were not on campus were contacted at their residences.

With funding from the Andrew Mellon Foundation, two research assistants were engaged to assist with data collection under the project with the sub-theme 'Language and Migration'. Data was collected through the use of questionnaires and interviews over a period of six weeks; between 15 September 2018 and 12 November 2018 in the Greater Accra, Eastern, Western and Ashanti Regions of Ghana.

A forty-three item questionnaire was designed for the study. The questionnaire had three sections. The first section aimed at gathering basic information on the personal details of the respondents. The second section contained questions designed to find out more about respondents' views on language choice in specific domains such as the market places and places of residence both in Ghana and their home countries. Also, we sought to find out about the strategies that these migrants employ to overcome linguistic barriers. Another aim was to compare the respondents' linguistic situation in Ghana to that of their home countries, as well as their linguistic competences in Ghanaian languages. The third section of the questionnaire aimed at the effects that the difference of the linguistic situation in Ghana has on their mother tongues or the languages they speak in their home countries.⁵

4. Analysis and discussion

The following section deals with the detailed analysis and discussion of the data. First, we will give some background and description of our interlocutors. This is followed by a discussion of the specific linguistic domains and language choices among East African migrants. The section compares the language use of respondents across three different domains, namely place of residence, interactions among friends (Ghanaians and fellow citizens) in their academic/work environment and the market place. Subsequent sections look at how migrants negotiate the use of languages; migrants' perception about Ghanaian languages, as well as the effects of migration on migrants' language use.

4.1. Demographic characteristics of respondents

The data was collected from a total of 33 East Africans currently residing in Ghana. The sample was dominantly male, representing 69.7% and 30.3% female with an average age grouping of approximately twenty-one years, indicating a youthful sample. We did not intend to target a particular gender. Forty-five percent (45.5%) were below twenty years and 36.4%

⁵ The interview sessions were recorded and transcribed. In preparation for the analysis, the data was coded with MS Excel spreadsheets. A full analysis of the data was accomplished with the statistical program SPSS.

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were aged between twenty-one and thirty years. In terms of their levels of education, most respondents had at least an equivalent of secondary level education. 78% of respondents were single and out of these 72.7% were foreign students (from high school to doctorate degree level), hence the main reasons for their migration to Ghana were for educational purposes. Eighteen percent (18.2%) were either teaching in Ghanaian institutions of higher learning or were undertaking research. The other 9.0% represent three respondents who were working in the area of ICT, journalism, and marketing, respectively. Respondents had averagely been in Ghana for a period of two years.

With regard to their nationalities, the respondents were mainly Kenyans and Tanzanians with 45% each, constituting 90% of the total sample. South Sudan, Uganda, and Rwanda were represented by one respondent each. Although Kenyans and Tanzanians were not purposefully chosen, they formed the majority of our respondents, as we specifically asked to be directed to Kiswahili-speaking migrants wherever we went.⁶ (For more details about the demographic characteristics of the respondents, see appendix, table 1).

4.2. Specific linguistic domains and language choice among East African migrant academics

The specific linguistic domains chosen for the study are the places of residence of the respondents, the academic/work environment and the market place. These were selected because they are the three domains where respondents spend most of their time and therefore were more likely to interact with Ghanaians. Also the linguistic set up in each of the three domains is very distinct. At the places of residence, especially at their hostels, respondents get to interact with both Ghanaians and to some extent with other students from their home or neighboring countries. In their academic and work environment, they engage in more formal communication and the medium of communication is generally English. At the domain of the market, the situation is completely different: the multilingual ecology of Ghana becomes evident; the market women come from diverse ethnic backgrounds with different language backgrounds and some do not speak English at all. Thus, this section compares the language use of respondents across the three different domains. In each of these domains, language use and language choice were compared to similar domains in the respondents' home country. Table 2 below indicates the language choices and language use of respondents in the three domains.

⁶ Although we did not find any proof, it is nevertheless probable that Kenyans and Tanzanians constitute the highest percentage of East African residents in Ghana.

Table 2: Differences in language choice and language use in Ghana and home country

Linguistic domain	Ghana		Home country	
	Dominant language	2nd dominant language	Dominant language	2nd dominant language
Place of residence	English	Kiswahili/OEAL	Kiswahili/OEAL	English
Academic/work environment	English	Kiswahili/OEAL	Kiswahili/OEAL	English
Market places	English		Kiswahili/OEAL	

Table 2 shows that within the respondents' places of residence in Ghana, the dominant language they use is English followed by Kiswahili or other East African languages (OEAL). This observation is supported by Hammer's (2017a) study on Polish-English bilinguals in the UK who are forced to use L2 frequently in private domains, as well as in informal settings. For instance, in the home country of the East African migrants, they tend to use Kiswahili and to some extent OEAL rather than English (the dominant language while in Ghana). As we have observed, the dominant language used is dependent on the country of residence at a particular time, whether respondents are in Ghana or in their home country. Although quite a number of respondents indicated that their mother tongue was OEAL, such as Kiberia and Teso of Kenya and Chagga of Tanzania⁷, some admitted their lack of proficiency in them. Most of them spoke Kiswahili as L1.

English is widely used in discussions among friends within the Ghanaian environment. This is due to the fact that naturally, English is the only common language shared by the immigrants and their Ghanaian friends. On the other hand, in their home countries, Kiswahili is often their dominant language as indicated in table 2 above. Below is an excerpt from our data on an answer given by a female Tanzanian academic respondent when she was asked in an interview about her language choice within specific linguistic domains in Ghana compared to the same domains in her home country, Tanzania. The following was her response:

I use Kiswahili and English at different times in Ghana because I use Kiswahili when I am in the house, and if I go out, I use English. And when I am at [sic] em my home country, I use Kiswahili, Kiswahili day and night wherever, because, for us, Kiswahili is even used in my village. Even in my home town, when I go, you know, I will use Kiswahili with all the people, young and old people. Like my husband, for instance, he has no other language than Kiswahili. (TF1)⁸

⁷ The other respondents speak Kinyamwezi, Kihehe and Kimatengo in Tanzania, Dinka in Sudan, Rukiga in Uganda, Gikuyu, Dholuo, Chichonyi, Luhya and Kikamba in Kenya and Kinyarwanda in Rwanda.

⁸ For identification codes representing respondents by country and gender, see appendix.

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As the excerpt shows, while Kiswahili is used at all times and places in the home country, in Ghana it has become the language of the place of residence, indoors and private places while English has become the language of outer and public space.

In addition to the language used in certain domains, the number of languages respondents use also increases at different times. This was observed in two (place of residence, and academic/work environment) out of the three linguistic domains in both Ghana and respondents' home countries. For instance, during interactions among friends in their academic/work environment, respondents said they use more languages in their home country settings than in Ghanaian settings. This means that respondents have more linguistic choices at their disposal in their home countries than they have in Ghana and that their language choice and language use is limited in the host country.

In contrast, during interactions at the market places, respondents' language choices are limited because of the linguistic situation in a typical Ghanaian market setting. Some respondents stated that they use more languages in market places in their home countries than they use in Ghana. Thus, in the case of interactions within the market place, they use English widely in Ghana with a lot of linguistic difficulties while they use Kiswahili/OEAL in their home countries.

4.3. Strategies for negotiating barriers in communicative situations

Responding to questions about communication barriers, informants said that they encounter problems of language barrier in the various domains especially at the market place. Table 3 highlights strategies employed by respondents in the attempt to overcome language barriers at their places of residence and the market places. The East Africans indicated that they were not competent in speaking Ghanaian local languages and thus encountered problems in communicating with the market women⁹ at the market.

At this point in the discussion, it is important to closely examine the various strategies applied by the East African migrants in specific domains and the socio-pragmatic factors that trigger such strategies. The data indicates that only a few respondents encounter communication barriers within the domain of their place of residence and at educational institutions. We observed that although there are common strategies used by migrants at both their residences and the market places, some strategies are used more often at the market place because of the linguistic complexity in the market environment in Ghana as is discussed later on in this section. In their interaction with neighbors at their residences and traders at the market, migrants

⁹ Many Ghanaian market women are not literate in English although some of them have had formal up to tertiary education (Ansah *et al.* 2017).

use four main strategies to overcome language barriers. The strategies are: admitting to having no competency; soliciting assistance with interpretation from other customers, sellers or Ghanaian friends; using English; and using signs and body gestures as shown in table 3 below.

Table 3: Strategies to overcome language barriers

Coping strategies	Number of respondents	Percentage
At the market		
Admit to having no competency	6	18.2%
Solicit assistance from others	15	45.5%
Use English	6	18.2%
Use signs and body gestures	7	21.2%
Learn to speak English / local language	3	9.1%
At place of residence		
Admit to having no competency	2	6.1%
Solicit assistance from others	3	9.1%
Use English	3	9.1%
Use signs and body gestures	1	3.0%
Learn to speak English / local language	1	3.0%
No barrier	19	57.6%

4.3.1. Admit to having no competence

At the place of residence, respondents noted that they largely do not have problems with communication because most of the time they use English as a medium of communication. Because a greater number of the respondents are students, their places of residence are located within educational institutions. Thus, within these premises, they usually do not encounter problems as all students speak English. A similar phenomenon occurs at the workplace in the case of respondents who work in various institutions. Below are some responses from the interviews conducted concerning strategies to overcome language barriers at their place of residence. As one of the Kenyans stated when asked whether he could speak any local Ghanaian language “I don’t have a problem since everyone speaks English. [...] But no, I cannot speak the local languages. [...] there is no challenge since I live with a colleague” (KMI). A Tanzanian student’s response to the same question was, “the good thing is that I can speak English, and in Ghana English is widely spoken, so it is easy for me to hmm¹⁰ [...] communicate with them” (TS1).

¹⁰ *Hmm* and *em* are hesitation markers used by the respondents.

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To reiterate the point made earlier, the major communication challenge that East African academic migrants face is at the market places. The linguistic landscape of a typical urban market in Ghana is multilingual (Bodomo *et al.* 2009). Traders in the markets come from diverse regions all over the country and therefore have very different ethnic, linguistic, cultural, educational and economic backgrounds. The linguistic situation is such that you will find Ghanaian market women speaking different local languages; Twi, Ga, Ewe, etc. all in one space, selling different items. The very diverse and complex linguistic situation in urban centers in Ghana (Ansah *et al.* 2017), therefore makes it impossible for migrants to predict the linguistic situation they will encounter since this will depend on the linguistic background of each trader they engage with. We believe that although there are shopping malls to meet the needs of migrants, the markets serve as a hub of both wholesale and retail of major staple foods and other goods. Goods including foodstuff can be very cheap at the market compared to the shopping centers, hence migrants prefer going to the market. As a male Kenyan academic explained: “I prefer going to the market because things are very cheap, and you will get everything there. I go to Accra Mall sometimes, but I go to the main Madina and Makola markets to do proper shopping. You know that here the main markets are Madina and Makola, you know!” (KM2).

The coping strategy used to negotiate communication with one trader may not be successful with another. A Tanzanian female student confirms this by asserting:

I see here in Ghana and at the markets, it's very hard to communicate, because if you say you are learning Ga¹¹, you go to another person, you don't know Twi¹², you struggle. You go there, you don't know Ewe¹³, you struggle. So it's very hard. And also here in Ghana, you cannot say you will learn all the languages; Fante¹⁴, you cannot say you learn everything. It is not possible. There are [sic] an advantage and disadvantage in this em language system. Compared to our Kiswahili, we only speak one language, and you can refer to the whole of Tanzania, even those who speak tribal languages, they know Kiswahili so the market setting in Tanzania is not so complex. (TS2)

The point being raised here is that the language situation in Ghana is diverse as compared to Tanzania where Kiswahili is the main language spoken by everyone. Because of the diversity of languages used at the market, one may have to know many languages such as Twi, Ga, Ewe etc. in order to have a successful communication. The same Tanzanian academic followed up with the comment below:

¹¹ Ga is the local language spoken in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana.

¹² Twi is the most widely spoken Ghanaian language (Eberhard *et al.* 2019).

¹³ Ewe is the local language spoken in the Volta Region of Ghana.

¹⁴ Fante is a local language spoken in the Central Region of Ghana. It is one of the three sub-branches of Akan. The other main languages are Asante Twi and Akuapim Twi (Eberhard *et al.* 2019).

One day I went to the market and I wanted to make the market woman feel I understand the language because I have learnt some Twi, unfortunately, when I went to one of them I realized she could not speak Twi. That woman was selling shea butter. I realize a lot of women hahaha... who sell shea butter, they don't speak Twi, and they don't speak English sometimes, so I called the nearby woman to help me. (TF1)

This scenario is a reflection of the complex language ecology in Ghana. Thus, it is not a situation where acquiring competency in one local language necessarily guarantees successful communication. The data indicates that migrants have to apply a combination of several communication strategies within the market domain. Respondents who used the strategy of admitting to not having competency in the local language that is used by the traders explained that they would normally inform the market women that they do not understand the language by the use body gestures. Admitting that they do not speak the local language, they then request that the trader kindly switch to a different language which they can understand easily. For example, a female Tanzanian student said "When I meet Ewe speakers I ask them to kindly speak English or ask for the help of someone (other traders or customers) who can speak English to help" (TS3). Some respondents also noted that sometimes, although a market woman may not speak English, she would try to communicate in whatever way possible, including resorting to Pidgin English, as illustrated in the excerpt below articulated by a female Tanzanian teacher:

People are very helpful, seriously. And like, there is another woman I buy smoked fish from in the market, Nima. Oh that one, is so active. She doesn't know English at all, but she will try and use like broken English or what people are calling Pidgin English. That woman is very helpful. (TF2)

4.3.2. Solicit assistance with translation from others

Soliciting assistance with translation from others was by far the most used strategy in the bid to overcome language barriers at the market place (about 45% of respondents) compared to 9.1% at the residence. Several respondents indicated that they would rather go to the market with friends who understand some local languages so that they help them to translate. Engaging the services of friends or interpreters was not only to resolve communication problems but also to avoid being cheated. This is because some respondents noted that prices of products tend to be inflated when sellers realize that buyers are foreigners and do not understand local languages. As two Kenyan respondents noted respectively: "Sometimes, I go with Ghanaian friends because at the market, when they realize you are a foreigner, they increase the price" (KM3). And, "[y]es, of course. When I want to negotiate with local market women and I don't speak Twi, they... (laughs) they know this one is a foreigner (laughs) and you cannot negotiate, so the price goes up" (KM4).

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4.3.3. Signs and body gestures

Nonverbal communication also plays an important role in communication, one of which is supplementing or replacing verbal communication (Wood 2006: 149). In the absence of interpreters or friends to help with interpretation, some respondents have to use signs and body gestures as a means to facilitate communication, especially, at the market. Some respondents told us that although the use of signs and body gestures facilitates communication, it does not give room for bargaining, thus, foreigners are prone to be cheated through the inflation of prices. A male Tanzanian student reported: “Sometimes, you look at what you want and point at it. You don’t have room to bargain”. “I just use sign language and we understand each other like to ask how much” (TM1). Relatively, this strategy constituting 21.2% in the market domain and 3.0% in the residence domain, was not as popular as the strategy of soliciting help with interpretation, but still significant in the market place.

4.3.4. Use of Ghanaian languages

Another coping strategy that was used by the East African migrants was to make use of the minimal competencies they have acquired in local Ghanaian languages. The majority of the respondents felt that although the situation at the market is a very complex one, it was advantageous to know a few basic words and phrases in at least one of the local languages. This type of language repertoire is referred to by Blommaert & Backus (2012: 13) as temporary language learning. When asked if he/she could speak some Ghanaian local languages a Tanzanian student said “oh no but to some extent, Twi. Just some few words”. He continued: “I can just say a few words like *mienu* ‘two’, *eti sen* ‘how are you?’, *bra* ‘come’, *ahi?* ‘how much?’ and others...hahaha. I just speak small small Twi”. This is confirmed by Ansah *et al.* (2017) who argued that the only thing that made *kayayei* (female porters) have fruitful business at the markets was to know a few words in Twi¹⁵, the most widespread local language in Ghana.

Our respondents noted that knowing just a few words in the language facilitated their communication with the market women. Thus, the ability to speak a local language is not only a stop-gap measure to overcome language barriers but also it prevents being defrauded by traders. This strategy enables them the reduction of prices for goods and services. If proficiency in the language (of the host country) can play an important role for migrants such as earning higher wages (Dustmann & Fabbri 2016; Bleakley & Chin 2004), then it can also lead to decreases in prices of goods for EA immigrants who shop at the markets in Ghana.

¹⁵ Twi is a language of the Akan languages which belongs to the Kwa group of the Niger-Congo phylum. Twi is spoken in Ghana, while other languages of Akan are spoken in Ivory Coast, which shares a border with Ghana.

To the question of the motivation for learning Ghanaian Languages or how helpful knowing some words in Ghanaian languages has been to their stay in Ghana, a Kenyan respondent said: “I want to feel accepted. The moment I realized that the moment you speak Twi, somebody opens up even more. I want to be accepted, you know?”. The Rwandan respondent believed that it was good to know a few phrases in Twi. He said: “Em how helpful? I talked about acceptance. The moment you speak, no matter how small, even if one word, you know somebody accepts you even more, and you feel also, accepted. You don’t feel alien again” (RM). Another Kenyan respondent also mentioned that “I will feel left out, like oh I would have... hmm... sometimes they will speak in Twi and I say I wish I also understood this” (KM5). Thus, acceptance and integration were the key motivational factors for the learning of Ghanaian languages by the East African migrants.

These assertions above, made by respondents are also echoed by Myers-Scotton (2000: 153) who believes that the use of a common language by two interlocutors is a way of narrowing social distance. She gives an example from her research in Nairobi where a passenger of a bus suddenly uses his own native language to communicate with the conductor for a discount and because the intended use of his native language negotiates social proximity to the conductor, it eventually earned him that discount.

Interestingly, on the contrary, a Sudanese respondent of our study articulated that there was no need to bother about learning any Ghanaian languages because to him the inability to speak a Ghanaian language is an opportunity to seek help from others or for people to come to his aid. “I will not say that my inability to speak a local language makes me feel not a Ghanaian, no, mostly I won’t just say that. I think it just brings attention to other people to help me” (SM).

4.4. Proficiency in Ghanaian languages

Although one means by which migrants integrate into their host societies is by learning local languages, table 3 above shows that only three out of the thirty-three respondents indicated that they use learning the language as a strategy for overcoming language barriers at the market place, and 24% of the respondents said they could speak a Ghanaian language either quite fluently or to a minimal extent (Table 4). This indicates that although 24% of the respondents can communicate in a Ghanaian language to some extent, only 9% use that as part of their strategy to overcome language barriers at the market place and only 3%, representing one individual, used learning a Ghanaian language as a strategy for overcoming communication barriers at the place of residence. The major Ghanaian language these respondents said they could speak is Twi, which is one of the most widely spoken languages in Ghana. Akan is also identified as one of the two principal languages of Ghana, the other is English (Eberhard *et al.* 2019).

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The respondents learnt the language in informal settings such as in interactions with friends, colleagues at workplaces and within their campuses, thus affirming Ansah *et al.*'s (2017) assertion that *kayayei* (local female migrant porters) in most markets in Accra affirmed their preference for learning Twi instead of any other local language because with Twi they are able to communicate with a high percentage of potential clients.

Table 4: Respondents' proficiency in Ghanaian language

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Ability to speak Ghanaian languages		
Yes	1	3%
No	25	76%
To some extent	7	21%
Local language spoken		
Ewe	1	3%
Twi	7	21%
None	25	76%
Mode of learning		
Informal	8	24%
Both formal and informal	1	3%
NA	24	73%
Reasons for learning a local language		
Ease in communication	5	15%
Desire to feel part of society	2	6%
Love for the language	1	3%
Work-related issues	1	3%
To prove a point	1	3%
NA	23	70%

4.5. Respondents' desire to learn Ghanaian languages

Although a relatively low percentage of respondents had some proficiency in Ghanaian languages, most respondents stressed the importance of learning a Ghanaian language to alleviate language barriers. The main reason which was given for the motivation to learn a local language was the desire to be able to interact with people; thus, for effective communication. A female Tanzanian journalist noted, "It's the Twi language that I must use to communicate comfortably with others in Ghana. It seems not too difficult to learn. I don't know about the writing though. Also, because it is my husband's language" (TF3). For that particular respondent, learning the Twi language will help her to communicate comfortably with others, especially her new extended

family, since she is married to a Ghanaian. Thus, her husband's local language Twi has become a "must learn" language for her.

Another respondent said he had to learn Twi in order to carry out his work effectively as a student clergy who resides in Ghana. This respondent is one of the East Africans who has come to Ghana to be trained as a pastor:

I had to learn the Twi language because of my training to be a pastor in Ghana and as a pastor, you relate to people when you are preaching and the people are Ghanaians. They speak Twi, so it forced me to also learn their language. If for instance, I am going to preach to someone who is illiterate and cannot speak English at all, then I need to speak his or her native language which is mostly Twi. (KM6)

Another pastor under training also said: "To be a missionary, it's very important." For the Sudanese respondent proficiency in Twi was just to prove to Ghanaians outside that he was once in their country and can speak their language (see table 4 above).

4.6. Perceived importance of acquiring Ghanaian languages

The study further investigated factors that would motivate respondents to learn Ghanaian languages. Over 80% of them affirmed their desire to learn a Ghanaian language. They cited various reasons, key among which is the need to communicate effectively as this helps to strengthen relationships with others. Others felt that to gain acceptance in the society, it is important to learn a local language in the host country. This corroborates Liv's (2017) findings on immigrants' language learning in Sweden, which have shown that the successful language learning enables access to social inclusion. The reasons provided are as detailed in table 5.

Table 5: Factors that motivate respondents to learn Ghanaian languages

Learning local language	Reason for learning
Desire to learn a local language	Effective communication
	Societal acceptance
	To help to buy something
	To learn culture/tradition
	To overcome language barriers
	To help relate better with people through better communication
No desire to learn a local language	The dominance of the English language
	Multiple languages
	Temporal nature of visit

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On the contrary, there were other migrants, especially the Rwandan and some Tanzanians who did not see any need to learn a local language. Although comparatively few, some of these respondents have cited the dominance of English as the major reason why they do not desire to learn a local language.

Respondents who could speak or were learning a Ghanaian language said they learnt it primarily through their interactions with native Ghanaians; they picked words they do not understand and asked for the meanings. Media sources such as songs, the electronic media, and the internet were other sources from which informal learning of local languages took place. Respondents believed that listening to local radio and television stations is an informal way of learning local languages, as the Tanzanian journalist said:

I learn em informally (laughs). I think I am progressing. Sometimes you hear some words and you try to understand. I didn't think there is a dual-lingual [sic] in em... dual-lingual is a platform, which you can learn various languages. So I'm not sure if Twi or Ga are there. It would be very easy to learn. That can help. (TF3)

Thus, respondents in their desire to learn the local languages mentioned new media platforms (such as Duolingo) where one can learn Ghanaian local languages.

4.7. Language use within East African homeland associations

One way in which language is maintained is through constant use. Being away from home for relatively long periods also means that most East African residents in Ghana may not be able to use Kiswahili (which is the L1 or L2) over longer periods. Often migrants from the same country or ethnic groups form in-group community associations which give them the opportunity to support each other in various ways in a foreign land (Deumert 2006: 132). One of the attractions of such associations is the opportunity for its members to communicate in their L1 and L2. The study, therefore, sought to investigate the roles that community associations play in the lives of migrants as far as language use is concerned. Interview sessions with the Tanzanian journalist gave insights to some of the reasons why they join the Tanzania Association in Ghana. She responded:

You see, in the association, I get the opportunity to speak Kiswahili. So, joining the association helps me practice my Kiswahili. Because if I don't practice it regularly, and the Kiswahili language is developing from time to time, new terminologies are coming. So, you know sometimes when I go back, when they mention something, I say 'what's that?'. Okay (laughs out loud). I just realized that I need to be speaking. I feel the sense of belongingness [sic] too. (TF3)

As table 6 shows, 36% of the respondents indicated that they are aware of Kenyan or Tanzanian community associations in Ghana. Although they know of such associations, only 27% said that they were members of those groups. Those with a membership in such groups noted that the dominant language used is Kiswahili and in some instances, English (see *ibid.*).

Table 6: Language use within East African community associations in Ghana

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Presence of Kenyan / Tanzanian associations		
Yes	12	36.4%
No	20	60.6%
Membership in an association		
Yes	9	27.3%
No	7	21.2%
N/A	17	51.5%
Language use		
Kiswahili	6	18.2%
English	1	3.0%
Both English and Kiswahili	2	6.1%
None	23	69.7%

4.8. Language choice for interaction among East Africans

Almost all the respondents, with the exception of one, had met and interacted with other East Africans in Ghana. Two respondents said they use only English during homeland association meetings while about 45% explained that they use both Kiswahili and English in the interactions with their fellow citizens from neighboring East African countries. Respondents gave various reasons for the choice of language in specific domains (see table 7 below).

Table 7: Reasons for language choice for interactions with East Africans

Language	Reason for choice
English only	Kiswahili is not spoken formally during association meetings
	Not fluent in the language (Kiswahili)
	Ability to speak English fluently
English and Kiswahili	English language is universal
	Use English to complement Kiswahili
	Effective communication with other East Africans
	Common language in East Africa
Kiswahili Only	Native speakers
	Proficient in speaking

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In cases where only English was used, the respondents were not proficient in Kiswahili. A Ugandan respondent noted that many Ugandans from their country use Kiswahili in informal settings. He noted that “[b]ecause many Ugandans do not speak Kiswahili widely, Kiswahili is used by a few people like gang men” (UM).

Kiswahili is a lingua franca for East Africans (even though there are several dialects of Kiswahili, they are mutually intelligible) and this was the reason why respondents are often able to speak with their colleagues from neighboring countries using only Kiswahili. We realized that other languages they speak did not have any effect on their use of Kiswahili.

However, despite the fact that Kiswahili is widespread in East Africa, English as a global language is also used especially by educated people and thus, Kiswahili-English codeswitching is common, especially in the Ghanaian setting. Other reasons for using Kiswahili-English codeswitching is their ability to speak both languages proficiently as one Tanzanian said:

I speak English because some don't understand the Kiswahili. For those who speak Kiswahili, I identify with them and there is a lot we share in common. I mix the languages, that is, Kiswahili and English, because some of my East African friends are not familiar with the complicated words in Kiswahili, so I just use both languages. (TM4)

The respondents' statement shows that Kiswahili-English codeswitching is used with East Africans who are not competent enough in Kiswahili. This means that the problem to engage with others extends to some of their East African counterparts.

4.9. Effect of migration on language use

Generally, migration has had some positive as well as negative effects on respondents' language use. Three groups had different opinions about the effect of migration on their language or areas in which their language use has been affected. One group of respondents numbering 14 (8 Kenyans and 6 Tanzanians) indicated that migration has affected their use of Kiswahili adversely because they have limited opportunities to use it. A Tanzanian responded said that “It has affected me very much. When I go home, it takes me a week or two to adapt to speaking Kiswahili. Not until recently I had few friends from East Africa; I had to speak only English”. Out of these 14 respondents, 7 said migration to Ghana has led to the improvement of their proficiency in English due to the compelling circumstances which necessitate them to constantly interact in English; often they have no other choice. Altogether, a total of 19 respondents indicated that living in Ghana has contributed in various ways to the improvement of their proficiency in English – a Tanzanian man said:

English is widely spoken in Ghana, so it's easy for me to speak now. Though myself I don't use English at all back at home, nevertheless, because I know it, I apply it. Maybe I should say it has made my English better. Because now I use more of English than em... definitely I have sharpened my English. (TM3)

One female Kenyan student stated: "I normally use English. My Kenyan accent has changed; my intonation has also changed. My Kiswahili has eroded totally." Similarly, on the influence on English accent, a female Tanzanian student said, "They have some pronunciations that I am forced to pronounce like they speak in Ghana." Some of the respondents posited that migration has had no significant effect on their proficiency in Kiswahili/OEAL, but rather it has led to the improvement of their English. This is because they have to improve their English in order to ensure effective communication. "Because I teach Kiswahili, it hasn't really affected the language. Through media, my Kiswahili is intact. It has made my English better unlike in Tanzania." (TF2)

The third group made up of only a few respondents was of the opinion that due to the availability of new electronic and social media their language use (proficiency) has not been affected in any way. A male Rwandese student pointed out that "[i]t hasn't affected [my language use] since I have other Rwandese I chat with even on the phone" (RM). Similarly, a male Kenyan academic said: "It hasn't, because of electronic communication, I speak as though I was at home, except the frequency" (KM7). Generally, the study shows that whether or not respondents' language use has been affected adversely or otherwise is also determined by how long they have stayed in Ghana.

5. Conclusion

In this paper we have analyzed the effects of migration on the language use and language choice of migrant East African students and workers within the linguistic domains of their residence, work/campus and marketplace. The results show that migration has had both positive and negative effects on language use and language choice of East African migrants in specific linguistic domains in Ghana. Particularly in the linguistic domain of the market place migrants are forced to use several strategies to negotiate communicative situations with Ghanaian traders because often the traders do not speak English. In respect of the linguistic strategies used in order to meet their socioeconomic needs especially at the market, the analyses have shown that respondents tended to solicit assistance in translation, while others used non-verbal communication such as signs and body gestures to negotiate language barriers encountered.

The paper also looked at specific domains in which migration has affected the choice of language of East African migrants in Ghana, and the alternative language choices these domains trigger. In this case, although the respondents generally possess some level of competencies in English, unlike in their home countries, they are forced to use English in all linguistic domains.

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The outcomes also show that because a substantial percentage of respondents are students, they do not encounter any significant language barriers in educational environments such as their places of residence and among friends. Their major challenge in communication thus occurs at educational institutions, the market places, where there is a very complex multilingual situation in Ghana compared to the predominance of Kiswahili at home.

Indeed, respondents pointed out the fact that the language situation in Ghana is complex compared to that of East Africa, especially Tanzania. Some said that this complex multilingual situation is the main reason for their unwillingness to learn a Ghanaian language as to learn just one local language may not be helpful. They believe that Ghana does not have one language that unifies the country as is the case in East Africa where Kiswahili can be said to be a unifying language. Although there are other local languages such as Ga and Ewe, as seen above, some respondents advocated for the use of Twi as a lingua franca since they realised that it was the most dominant and most widely spoken language in Ghana. They believe that having one language can foster communication and therefore facilitate unity. It was also noted that although a high percentage of respondents were not members of East African homeland associations, for the few who were, these associations presented the opportunity for them to use Kiswahili since most fellow East Africans speak it proficiently. Several respondents have also found it necessary to learn a Ghanaian language as a stop-gap measure to overcome language barriers, especially at the market place.

The study has brought to light significant effects that migration to a place with a different linguistic landscape can have on one's language choice and language use. As a result of the differences in the linguistic ecology in Ghana and East Africa, most respondents are forced to use English, which is not their preferred language choice. The paper has shown that migration to Ghana has affected some respondents' use of Kiswahili adversely while it has led to the improvement of their proficiency in English. For others, although migration to Ghana has had no significant effect on their proficiency in Kiswahili, it has led to the improvement of their English. A few respondents, however, were of the opinion that their language use (or proficiency) has not been affected in any way by their migration to Ghana as they are able to maintain regular contact with home. Given the little scientific attention that has been given to East African migrants in Ghana by now, there is a clear need for further studies in this area.

List of abbreviations

KM	Kenyan male	TM	Tanzanian male
KF	Kenyan female	UM	Ugandan male
RM	Rwandese male	*TS	Tanzanian student (students were not coded with gender)
SM	Sudanese male		
TF	Tanzanian female		

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Appendix

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	23	69.7%
Female	10	30.3%
Age group		
Less than 20 years	15	45.5%
21 - 30 years	12	36.4%
31- 40 years	3	9.1%
41-50 years	2	6.1%
Above 50 years	1	3.0%
Marital status		
Single	26	78.8%
Married	6	18.2%
Not single, not married, undisclosed	1	3.0%
Highest educational level		
Secondary school certificate	14	42.4%
Bachelor's degree	10	30.3%

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Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Highest educational level (<i>cont.</i>)		
Master's degree	6	18.2%
PhD	1	3.0%
Other	2	6.1%
Areas of occupation		
Education / Research	6	18.2%
Information/communication technology	1	3.0%
Journalist	1	3.0%
Marketing officer	1	3.0%
Student	24	72.7%
Country of origin		
Kenya	15	45%
Rwanda	1	3%
South Sudan	1	3%
Tanzania	15	45%
Uganda	1	3%